



Coleridge Dickinson

Oral History Transcription

Sept. 22, 2003 [Side A]

Interviewed by:	David Healey and Lester Lamon
Place of interview:	Home of Coleridge Dickinson
Date of interview:	Sept. 23, 2003
Approximate length of interview:	47 minutes
Transcribed by:	Howard Dukes, staff, Civil Rights Heritage Center
Date of transcription:	August/September 2019
Summary:	Coleridge Dickinson is the son of union leader, civil rights activist, and state legislator Jesse Dickinson.

0:00:00 [David Healey] Today is the twenty second of September 2003 we're at the home of Coleridge Dickinson. We're going to interview Mr. Dickinson today. At the home is Dr Les Lamon and David Healey and Mr. Coleridge Dickinson.

[LL] Mr. Dickinson as you know we're creating an oral history archive. Our focus is on the history of the black community in South Bend and especially on race relations and any area that impacts on civil rights and the civil rights movement. To get a better understanding of... for example for the need of the civil rights movement we then try to get a picture of what race relation were like. You grew up here. Were you born in South Bend?

0:01:03 [Coleridge Dickinson]: No.

[LL] Where were you born.

[CD] Kansas.

[LL] You were born in Kansas, so you moved here with your...

[CD] Dad and mom.

[LL] When?

[CD] 1927, 1928 somewhere along in there.

[LL] Ok how old were you at the time?

[CD] Two... two or three years old.

[LL] Ok. So, most of your life has been spent in South Bend.

[CD] Right.

[LL] How would you characterize in terms of growing up as a young boy and then a young man what were opportunities like for minorities for African Americans?

0:01:40 [CD] Well, it was difficult to say because I was when I was in high school and then I worked at the school and I didn't participate in activities per se. We were used to going to church. They were separated... we didn't go to white church and white people didn't come to our churches. We could go to the natatorium, but we could only go one day a week and that was on Monday before they cleaned the pool and let all the water out Monday night and filled it up again on Tuesday and Wednesday.¹ These sort of

¹ Mr. Dickinson is repeating an oft cited myth about pool water being drained after days African Americans were allowed to swim during segregation. There is ample evidence that the process to drain and refill a pool the size of the Engman Natatorium would take between 3-7 days—making it impossible

things were very common. We never thought anything about them. It was just the way the society was operating as far as going downtown and being able to sit at lunch counters there were a few private entities that blacks were barred from but there was no big rush to integrate to that point. For example, dad was running the... the part of Alex's Shoe Hospital where they died shoes. Cleaning and dying... what they call off the foot work. On the corner of Jefferson and Main was a little restaurant on that corner across from the First Bank and Trust company. A guy named Swetol ran the place that was the name of it.

0:03:23 [CD] But he got to the point that he didn't want African Americans in his establishment, so dad told him you stay out of this establishment. Actually, the establishment didn't belong to dad. It was Kotskie. John Kotskie owned it... or ran it. But this was the way dad was very aggressive always aggressive and very quick and very retortful in dealing with people. Most of his activity I was not aware of nor did I take part in. My twin brother was home until he was in his early 30s and he was far more familiar with dad's practices and so forth. But I wasn't there. After high school I left and went to Denver.

[LL] Ok. How long were you Denver?

0:04:20 [CD] I was there until 1949 or the early part of 1950 I came back to South Bend.

[LL] Ok.

[CD] Of course, by that time I was married and started a family. So, I... my time was taken up with raising a family and getting a job and I did join the NAACP. I was active in the union. But I was not subjected to the idiosyncrasies of the majority by being a union member we had as minorities. Blacks we had the same privileges as the other people had.

[LL] You felt like the union gave you those privileges.

0:05:12 [CD] I feel well this is back before civil rights days... yeah most of that came through... well not altogether because dad had worked had... been one of the first blacks to get jobs inside of Bendix. Up until dad, Dwight Smith, Witherspoon, Horace Pope, I believe were the first four blacks that got jobs inside of the plant. Up until then people like George Foray and some of the other people they worked for Bendix, but they were out in the cinder pile or hauling coal or doing work outside the plant. They didn't come inside the plant to work. So actually, dad was very was actually

to drain each time if African Americans were allowed to swim once per week. For more, see: Indiana University South Bend Civil Rights Heritage Center. *Oral History, Paul McMinn, Robert Goodrich, and Robert Heiderman*, 2018. <http://archive.org/details/OH-McMinn-Goodrich-Heiderman-2018-04-11>.

instrumental in getting Bendix to open up for the blacks to come inside of the plant.

0:06:14 [LL] When would that have been? Was that before World War II or after?

[CD] It was about the time of World War II because dad went to the legislature—I think—the first time in '39 so shortly after that because they let dad go because he was supposed to be at work, but there was legislation going on in Indianapolis and he went to Indianapolis instead of going to Bendix so they let him go so it must have been prior to World War II.

[LL] Prior to World War II.

[CD] Yes, but then after the government came along and these companies that had defense contracts had to do away with that.

[LL] Fair employment practices commission.

[CD] Yep. That's right.

[LL] But your dad... How did your dad himself get employment at Bendix?

[CD] This I can't I don't know. I wasn't privy to that. Because at that time I was just a kid. I don't know.

[LL] Right.

0:07:13 [CD] It may have been the way he first went to the legislature. They had blacks in the legislature. I remember a fellow named Conner. J. Chester Allen from here. Wills, Zilford Carter. A number of them had been elected from here or from... I think Conner came from Fort Wayne. There was one or two others from Indianapolis. Once again, I'm not familiar with those people. I know of them and J. Chester Allen was the one who talked dad... had talked dad into running for the legislature. He had become popular with his music directing choirs the youth programs like Hering House, WPA band and they had the WPA building over there on Chapin Street. Right where the Sav-a-Lot is now along in there.

[LL] What was that called? I heard reference to that before.

[CD] I really can't tell you the name.

[LL] But your dad had a band that played there didn't he?

0:08:25 [CD] Well he was.... he was what they called his band. He played with a band. Most of them are dead now. Yeah, they played there and also played for street dances. They had some street dances here in sections of the city and this was called the WPA band. And it was one of the

projects that was funded by the federal government through the WPA and if I may be political that's what that pinhead in the White House ought to be doing now. Pardon me. Something like WPA, CCC camps. All these entities that took people—young people—off the street and let them do something creative. And this is what the WPA did. And I think that would solve a lot of problems now.

[LL] So, your dad, so your dad actually was working for WPA?

[CD] WPA at first.

[LL] And part of his responsibility was as a musician... maybe his entire responsibility.

0:09:31 [CD] No not entirely because they put on productions plays it... groups of people. He was more or less in charge of that. I don't know who was in above dad. I don't think dad was hired directly out of Washington with the WPA. In fact, because in other projects there were people out of Washington who headed up all the of the entities that the government subsidizes so I can't go into the particulars of how dad... the connection between dad and the federal government of the WPA. They had these programs where kids would work after school and help the teachers which was another project that came under that Works Project Administration. And they received \$5 a month. Now in those days that was pretty good money. You could do a lot. In those days you could have a date for a dollar twenty-five cents to get in a show. A dime for a box of popcorn a nickel for ice cream afterwards, you know. So, it wasn't a lot of money for those people but hey if you're paying or buying a family that worked and had a good job it brought groceries sometimes.

[LL] Now, did some of those programs operate out of Hering House?

0:10:56 [CD] I don't think they operated directly out of Hering House to my knowledge. I didn't know the infrastructure on that. I do know that B.G. Smith headed the Hering House as far back as I can remember I left here he passed then Frazier was there. They had a guy named Robinson for a while. Dad, I don't think ever ran Hering House. But he was definitely affiliated with the organization. To what extent the federal government put money into Hering House that I can't answer I do know that the community supported it. Most all black activities were centered around Hering House.

[DH] Your father was a boy scout leader—a troop leader.;

[CD] Yeah Boy Scout troop. Think they came out of the south side or west side or Hering House. I enjoyed that so much because we got free tickets to Notre Dame football games.

[LL] Oh, is that right.

[CD] For the first game every year that gave free tickets to the boy scouts, girl scouts those organizations.

[LL] When I was growing up the university of Tennessee did that too

[CD] They did, huh?

[LL] Yeah Safety patrol, boy scouts.

[CD] All those entities received free tickets to at least one game a year.

[LL] It was usually a game though against some team who they were going to beat 50-0.

[CD] Yeah.

[LL] In fact, I remember seeing Johnny Unitas play. He was at the University of Louisville. Of course, they always beat them terribly, but I saw him play because I got free ticket just like you said.

0:12:45 [CD] It was the same way here. When the first black made it to the Big 10... now I can't recall his name he played for Northwestern. This was back in the 30s. Northwestern, Georgia Tech are the two that I remember mostly.

[LL] Now you... you went to Central?

[CD] [nods yes]

[LL] And graduated when?

[CD] 1943.

[LL] 1943. Did you go into the military or did you get a job?

[CD] Almost exactly because in 1942 during our spring... our summer vacation they had to let my twin brother and I take a bus trip we went to Denver. We had relatives there we didn't know... they knew us, but we didn't know them. So, we went to Denver spent a couple of weeks there with the relatives. Came back to Kansas. Came back to South Bend. Graduated went back to Denver. I stayed. My twin brother stayed a couple of three months and he came back to South Bend. That is why he is the one who should be here doing this because he stayed with mom and dad Lived there at home...

0:13:56 [LL] That was Roland.

[CD] Roland. Right. And I'm out in Denver went into the navy. Later Roland came into the navy he was drafted from here. He didn't stay in he

got discharged and came out. I spent 2 and a half years. But I was drafted from Denver. So, when I got out of the service. I went where I had a job. I just went back to a job I left. Which they did for service men in those days. I went back to a job as a dining car waiter

[LL] Ooh.

[CD] So, I worked on the railroad for about six years.

[LL] That's a pretty good job wasn't it?

0:14:40 [CD] In those days... I was another one of... of those class things. In Denver primarily. If you are familiar with the slavery times, they had the house slaves and the field slaves and dining car servers were like the house slaves, and then they had the field slaves. That is, we never got dirty. We had a white jacket with a pocket square. We had a clean job with the difference being when not the sling out sledge hammer pounding those spikes working outdoors in all of the... so there was a difference even back in those days there was a separation within the race not for color but basically with the type of job you had then they had another class where they were strictly domestics. Deal with. Lot of people with money... white people and they had a lot of black servants, chauffeurs yard people. So, there were various classes. So being a dining car waiter where I had a clean job never got dirty belonged to the waiter's club being a service man... ex-service men and my cousin that I stayed with.

0:16:12 [CD] Her husband was a Pullman porter—another one of the clean jobs. He never got dirty once again wearing that clean jacket. Riding up and down the railroads. Associating, hobnobbing, so to speak while dealing with wealthy white people business people, movie stars and so forth so you had altogether different class of people. All of them minorities African American but they segregated themselves and this is the group that I belonged to because I had a clean job. And then I went to from there to Denver University. I went for a while. I got married started a family, so I came back to the railroad for a while. And then my mother said you ought to come home. You ought to come home. So, my wife's mother was not the most amenable person. Not to me anyway because her daughter had gotten sick and she blamed me for me for it. So, Mrs. Hall and I had our differences, so I came back to South Bend. And I've been here ever since.

0:17:31 [LL] What work did you do when you came back here?

[CD] Well, one of the first jobs I had... do you remember when the polar door building used to be at Colfax and Michigan? Colfax street came up over the river on a little incline. On this side they had the Granada Theater.

[LL] I remember the Granada Theater.

0:18:00 [CD] Ok, they had a little drive going down under the theater, and when you got to Michigan street you went south. There was the Philadelphia and then there was a real steep alley. Well, down that alley and back almost under the bridge on that corner was the polar door building. Polar door. They also owned the Philadelphia and the Strategus and restaurants and some other entity and the guy who ran that was named Ed Mifflin, and I worked there for Ed. My job was washing cars everybody that kept their car had an office in the polar door building. Kept their cars in the garage inside out of the weather got a free car wash every week. That's whoever drove in and wanted a car wash. That's where I worked, washing cars.

0:18:57 [CD] Charles W. Cole from Cole and Son Architect was one of the people who had an office in that building so he came down there coming through one time told me about a job at first Bank and Trust Company as a messenger. I drove a little green jeep around town. So, I kept that job oh for maybe six months and Cole... I also had a part time job working at South Bend Tri Club natatorium company in the kitchen washing dishes and that sort of thing and somebody told me pointed out C.D. Anthony was the manager of fuel control on the aircraft side called of plant aircraft and I asked him about getting me on at Bendix. See that was a big step from washing cars and driving that green little green around. So, he came back the next day I was at the bank car drove up and Red Marley who use to be associated with a racing team... Drewys' used to have a car associated with the Indianapolis 500.

[LL] Drewys' Brewery did?

0:20:28 [CD] Yeah and Red Marley was associated with that but he was also a driver of a car from Bendix so the car drove up and Red was there and C.D. Anthony beckons for me to come over to the car and he hands me these papers and says fill these out and give them to the man named here. The man's name was Rowe named Rowe and he was with the employment office so I filled the out and took them down to Rowe and he said Ok 'll see you here tomorrow morning and I said no I can't do that, and he said why. And I said I have to give the bank two weeks' notice. I thought that was the proper thing to do and he said Ok when you do that come on back. So, I went to Bendix and I stayed there for 37 and a half years. But in the meantime, I had other part time jobs too. But that's how that happened.

0:21:31 [LL] Well, did you have any... did you ever feel for example we've heard other people saying that were just some areas that you... that you couldn't get jobs there were jobs for black people and there were jobs for

white people. Did you feel like that was true in town from your experience?

[CD] From my experience no. I can't remember anyplace I went to look for a job where this was a problem. I guess I was aware of the fact that I was a teenager and I was not going to work a big paying job. I was going to work the job that they had for teenagers—no experience no education. No background, so I worked at Montgomery

Ward washing dishes and mopping floors. I worked for Joe Simon had a four-hour laundry. These were they types of jobs I had when I was in high school.

[LL] You saw...

00:22:33 [CD] That I had in high school, but I had... I'm not like some of the people that were older and had families and tried to find a better job to support themselves or and some experience or training or education that thought they were tied up and couldn't get a better job. I didn't fit into that category so at the time I was satisfied with what I had now after came back from the service. I wasn't particular the big thing I wanted was to get on at Studebaker. That's where everybody was making the money. I tried but I could not get on at Studebakers. Oliver Scott, he couldn't get me on. My brother was working out there and he couldn't do me any good. Dad, I don't know how much effort he put forth to get me out there. But I could not get on at Studebaker. So, I went to Bendix.

[LL] You went to Bendix which was still a good job.

00:23:30 [CD] Well yeah it was—pardon the term —a damn good job and it turned out to be the best deal after all.

[LL] Yeah, that's true.

[CD] So, I stop and think now that the Lord knew what he was doing. I couldn't get on at Studebakers, but I got on at Bendix.

[LL] Yeah, it didn't close on you did it.

[CD] Huh?

[LL] Bendix didn't close.

[CD] No.

[LL] Right.

[CD] It didn't as such until I left

[LL] I know your dad was very active in trying to open up maybe like he was with Bendix the phone company and other places where blacks couldn't get a job. He was very active in trying to get people into...

[CD] Into those positions.

[LL] Into those positions, yeah.

00:24:19 [CD] There were some blacks who got jobs at the telephone company. Arthur Grayson got on at the telephone company, but he was in a janitorial position. But he was working for Indiana Bell. Another guy I think his name for Dunfee, he worked for the telephone company but primarily the same line. The same line of work. But as far as women getting the desk jobs and the switchboard jobs the men being linemen and switch... and the switching rooms I don't know any black... early... now after World War II and after the 64 when we had the big movement... until then there weren't any.

[LL] Yeah.

00:25:21 [CD] I do know some became switchmen... switchmen and worked on telephone lines and this sort of thing. And some of the early electricians, now, Bill Stewart for example or Dwight Smith or John Harris or Jones all these guys were good electricians. And most of them started at Central in those days when you went to the six grade you went to junior high school must all the boys going to junior high school had to take a shop course. a lot of them turned into electricians. And they used it all their lives.

[LL] Yeah.

[CD] They were electricians and that they could do to help the situation. But Bill Stewart went to Bendix with his Dwight Smith took his electrician work. John Harris was out there. Jones went into business for himself. They were using what they had learned but they still couldn't crack that barrier to get the jobs – the better jobs. Bill Rogers was a switchman. I ran into him when I was washing floors one of those part time jobs I had. I knew when I ran into Bill, but he also worked at Bendix. His brother worked at Bendix, George. But as far as blacks being in the better jobs they were very, very... at the telephone company there were very few.

[LL] Very few. How did it... the civil rights movement make a difference in that. Do you remember anything specific?

00:26:58 [CD] Nothing specific. I do remember that we started having more black policemen and it was easier to get on the fire department back in the early 50s before I went to Bendix there was a fire chief his name was Brown his wife was Marcella Brown. She was something down at the

courthouse and he tried to get me to leave Bendix to work down at the fire department. I guess at the time there was an effort to push to get blacks in the organization, but I wasn't really interested in the fire department. They had no reputation for black firemen. There was no guarantee that if something came along that I'd be out of a job again. But as long as I worked for Bendix or I had the union behind me I didn't have to depend on the idiosyncrasies of one individual, so I didn't go to the fire department. But I could have done that about 52, 53, somewhere around there, but I didn't do it.

00:28:08 [LL] Did they hire anyone else any other...

[CD] Well, they started hiring some blacks I know Donald Howell was hired... but see I just wasn't that active or interested in the movement as such. Because all of the information and things we had on the news and on TV... that was about the problems they were having primarily in the south.

[LL] The south, yeah.

00:28:35 [CD] So, I didn't have those problems here. Not to that extent. Some people were... would very politely turn you off or turn you down. But the... the strong anti-black movement that they had in the south and border states we just didn't have that up here. And we had dad and a few other people who I think should have done more – in my opinion—in schooling younger people coming on behind them go to carry on where they left off when they died. This is one thing that I have fault with my dad for. Wills, Carter, J. Chester Allen. He did alright with his son. His son became a judge. But none of the other men that I mentioned never had anybody come behind them to take over. My brother... Valjean. He did go to the legislature for a while. His wife is still in the legislature down there in Indianapolis. Yes, she is in like her third or fourth term there.

[LL] What is her name?

[CD] Mae.

[LL] Mae Dickinson.

[CD] Uh-huh. Back at the statehouse. They all know Mae.

00:29:57 [LL] So, she is a state representative...

[CD] State representative...

[LL] From Indianapolis.

[CC] Yeah.

[LL] When did Valjean die?

[CD] I knew you were going to ask me a question like that. I don't know. I think I can get it...

[LL] That's alright I just was curious. And he was really pretty young, wasn't he?

00:30:24 [CD] Yeah, Vall was real young when he died. He and my brother Terrell. Terrell was in his 60s. Valjean was only in his 50s when he died. You have to pardon me, but I had a [inaudible] I can hardly... have picture of it in here and I think I was going through here the other day and saw one of Val.

[LL] Wasn't he also the president of the NAACP?

[CD] Valjean?

[LL] Yeah.

[CD] I don't know he may have been at one time. After he got married. [inaudible] I can't find it now. If I look for it tomorrow. As soon as I don't want it I'll find it.

00:31:55 [LL] I just wanted to confirm. I thought that he died quite some time ago as a relatively young person.

[CD] Yeah, Val's been dead for... ok thank you. Ten. Mae. I mean Leslie...

[Wife of Coleridge Dickinson] Yes.

[CD] You in the basement?

[Wife of Coleridge Dickinson] I'm in the bathroom.

[CD] Oh. Um... were we married when Valjean died? If we were married when Valjean died it's been pretty close to 20 years—18 years now. By the time my second marriage was, so Val's been dead for quite a while.

00:32:55 [LL] Now, let me ask you another thing in terms of another area we are interested in is education. It doesn't seem to me like you probably... I'm really wondering when Valjean died.

[Wife of Coleridge Dickinson] I'm not sure.

[CD] We were married...

[Wife] We married in '85.

[CD] Yea but we were married when he died then. He died when we were married. I mean after we got married, he died. Or we were just going together when he died. You don't remember that either, do you?

00:33:26 [Wife] We were just going together, I guess. I'm not sure.

[CD] It's been about 18 maybe ... between 18 and 20 years since Val's been dead. Yeah, something like that. Now. Education wise.

[LL] Yeah, you weren't you all did you live here? Was this your family home?

[CD] Yeah basically, so to speak...

[LL] You went to Linden school then?

[CD] I went to Denver.

[LL] No, but I was thinking even as growing up did you go to Linden?

[CD] No, I went to Perley School on the east side.

[LL] You went to Perley. You lived over on the east side.

[CD] We lived on the east side all the time.

[LL] Ok alright.

[CD] I was the first in the family to move to the west side.

[LL] Ok, alright. Where did your father and your mother live over there?

[CD] We lived on Frances Street.

[LL] Ok.

[CD] When we first came to South Bend, we lived on Georgiana Street for a few months. Then we lived on Burns street for a few months then dad rented a house on Frances Street and we stayed there until 1939 and then he moved downtown—300 block on East Jefferson. Of course, that's all gone now.

00:34:34 [LL] Oh, sure yeah.

[CD] [inaudible] plumbing was right there. Lincolnway and Jefferson. Northeast corner.

[LL] That was residential then.

[CD] Well, they had residential upstairs.

[LL] I see.

[CD] Most of the first floor was [inaudible] so we lived there, and I went in the service then and I left here and went to Denver. From Denver I went to the service. Later when I was in the service, they moved to Talbott street and they stayed there until...

[LL] Where is that?

[CD] On the east side, northeast side.

[LL] Ok.

[CD] Off South Bend Avenue.

[LL] Ah I know where it is.

[CD] Right past where Howard street goes this way and Duey Street goes and the next ways. Duey on the other side of South Bend Avenue Talbot Street only ran from Howard to South Bend Avenue and they stayed there until they left there.

0:35:40 [LL] Why did you go to Central when you grew up over there? Why did you go to Central instead of Adams?

[CC] When I was going to school John Adams wasn't there.

[LL] Oh.

[CD] Adams didn't come along until about 1944 along somewhere in there.

[LL] Oh, so everybody went to Central.

[CD] Everybody went to Central except for those who lived closer to Adams. They had to go to Adams or Riley. And Riley was pretty down for more affluent – along with parts of River Park. Most of those people went to Riley. Everybody else went to Central.

[LL] One impression I have of the South Bend schools is that they were pretty segregated. That doesn't mean that... that there were not African Americans in various schools but they were a few elementary schools that had most all of the African-Americans. How do you account for that?

00:36:47 [CD] Same way it is today. A lot of times it had to do with the real estate companies. Certain places they won't let negroes buy. And if they do, the territory is so red-lined and they had a way of taxing property to the point that where most of where the poorer property was where most of the minorities lived. That's the reason they had places like

Adams and Riley. They always had better schools, better teachers, more equipment. But Central when I was coming up, we didn't have as many

schools so Central got a pretty good share of what was available. We had the biggest enrollment, so we had the best football teams and basketball teams. The theatrical productions were bigger and better...

00:37:41 [LL] Oh yeah...

[CD] Because we had...

[LL] James Lewis Cassidy.

[CD] ...a better teacher.

[LL] The problem was more in the elementary schools it seemed to me.

[CD] Because they had the feeder system, they didn't have the busing. You walked to school. I still think that's a shame in my day you need that cohesion with the school and the territory and that area around the school see, my mom and dad when I got in trouble they could walk to the school. We didn't live but a block from school but now my grandson has trouble in school his parents have to go clear out to Greene to check out the problem.

[LL] He goes to Greene?

00:38:25 [CD] Yeah. That stupid heifer down there... pardon me. Down there in the school city had him going clear out to Greene! That's stupid! But she said we have to have diversity. You mean you can't do any better than that? But he's not my child. His dad and mom can do what they want to do. They had a reason for sending him clear out there. I think it's ridiculous. But even today if we were to go back to neighborhood schools, we'd have the same problems. Most of the blacks would be...

[LL] In one area.

00:39:06 [CD] In this area. Primarily at Harrison school. They added a new school, but that's mostly for the Hispanics to go in that section of town. There would probably be more minorities at Riley and John Adams, because John Adams is mostly all black now anyway. Then you have Clay and you have Jackson. Now to cut down on minority population at your school they put up Clay because in those days when they first put Clay up blacks didn't buy out there.

And now we got blacks all over Clay Township and Granger those in Granger go to Penn-Harris-Madison. Scottsdale, they put a school out there Jackson and they were trying to cut down black enrollment they will never tell you this, but this is basically what it's about. Blacks moved out there now. So, there is no area in the county now where they cannot... where blacks can't get into the school regardless to the ethnic setup of

the elementary school feeder system. Because they bus them all over town. Some people say that's what we need. We need them bussed. Well in my opinion no.

00:40:24 [CD] Diversity is nice, but you don't get the best teachers don't get the best equipment don't have the best equipment don't have the best... it all goes somewhere else. Because this is the poor section of town. We'll keep it that way. They get the poorest teachers they don't get the best educated teachers they don't get the best equipment. They don't have the best of anything because you're a minority group. So, we'll bus them clear out here what the hell good does that do? They still aren't getting any more than what they had if they were over here.

00:41:00 [LL] You know you mentioned the idea that it had a lot to do with where people could buy a home – the realty association or banks or whatever – you remember a guy named Billy Morris?

[CD] Yes, I remember Billy Morris. We were on the track team as a matter of fact when I was six, seven, eight, nine years old we delivered the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

[LL] Billy Morris grew up here in town?

[CD] Yes.

[LL] Did he really?

[CD] He went to Central. He was on the track team. And he had what they call the varsity limp. You know how he walked with that little limp. All the guys who played varsity sports would get hurt you know. This would show that I'm on the track team. I'm on the football team. They had this little limp they walked with. I used to deliver papers to his house. His sister's name was Ruth and I used to deliver the paper there. Billy went to Central. He graduated from Central High School.

00:41:59 [LL] Was he younger or older than you?

[CD] He was older.

[LL] So, he graduated from Central. You say... he... he delivered the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

[CD] No, I did.

[LL] You delivered the Courier to his house

[CD] They were one of my customers.

[LL] Ok. Well he was somebody who was extremely active in...

[CD] NAACP. That was a big deal he was hooked into the NAACP. Head of the what they call real estate or something. Helping people get houses, but he ended up in New York. He couldn't do it here.

[LL] He started out here. He went to New York in '65.

[CD] Yeah. And he got to be a big shot next thing I know we was down in Washington. So... he hadn't done shit... pardon me. He didn't do nothing for South Bend. You gon' have to beat this thing to death.

[laughter]

[DH] That's pretty tame to compared to some of the stuff we heard.

[laughter]

0:42:59 [CD] I see... this is what I am saying when I get back to dad J. Chester Allen and some of the other people. I still think there is more what I call the more successful minority people could have done to help South Bend promote diversity. By helping the people locally to step into their shoes and keep pushing like they were pushing. Dad was quite a pusher for anything he didn't feel was right. I was never aggressive or vociferous. I was not a debater. I can't... I don't talk. My twin brother Roland could talk. Valjean could too. My brother Carroll, but I'm the only in the family. I'm the dumbest one, see. I'm the only one in the family...

[inaudible]

0:43:53 [CD] That never had the desire to follow in the footsteps. I never [inaudible] cared what my dad was doing. All I was interested in doing was make sure I had a place to sleep, food to eat, come and go as I pleased. Cuz in my first marriage I was wild, and I stayed single for 16 years, so you know I was feeling my oats. And I met her, and she calmed me down. But this was one of the things I feel could have been done a lot better. But that's hindsight.

[LL] It is and it's the responsibility of every generation I think to be sure that you're preparing the next to move the next step. That's true. Reason I was mentioning Billy Morris is that he and your dad corresponded a lot.

0:44:49 [CD] That was because of real estate.

[LL] A lot of it was real estate and hiring. He was also involved in trying to break down a lot of the hiring practices.

[CD] See now I was never aware of Billy Morris doing those sort of things.

[LL] Through the NAACP. A lot of it

[CD] Dad had a whole lot of things going on, but I did not live at home. I was not privy to the meetings he would have at home with various organizations and members I didn't go to all these meetings he had a meeting every night sometimes two. But see I was never worked up there I had no interest in that.

[LL] You had no interest. Billy Morris' sister is not still living. Is she?

[CD] I have no idea where Ruth is. I have no idea at all. As far as I know it was just the two of them, Billy and Ruth.

0:45:44 [LL] They lived on the east side too.

[CD] They lived on Bissell Street in the 1200 block.

[LL] Yeah.

[CD] Second house from the corner. Eight or nine steps to go up to get to their house.

[LL] [laughter] Ok.

[CD] There are anumber of little things now that I'm old and I look back. I think that could have been done differently. Like I said hindsight. We had no idea that things could get to the point where they are now because back in the 30s and 40s there were things that happened in the 50s and 60s that we never thought of. We had... I look around now as far as minorities are concerned, we have two lost generations.

[LL] Yes, that's right. Two.

0:46:38 We have two lost generations. And we can find very little that's being done in the minority community to combat it.

[Audio ends]